

"LINCOLN'S LAST DAY"

BY
WILLIAM H. TOWNSEND

To my friend,
Jos. Hay, Jr.
With the sincere good wishes
always of
W. H. Townsend

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LINCOLN'S LAST DAY

WM. H. TOWNSEND

(Mr. Townsend is authority on matters pertaining to Lincoln. He has one of the best collections of Lincoln literature to be found anywhere. This article is the result of considerable investigation made by Mr. Townsend. He is a graduate of the Law College of the University of Kentucky and is City Attorney for Lexington. We consider ourselves fortunate to be able to give our readers this account of Lincoln's Last Day.—Editor.)

The 14th of April, 1865, dawned cloudless, without sign or portent of what evening would bring to Abraham Lincoln. Spring had come early in the District of Columbia. Along the sluggish Potomac the willows were green and warm sunshine had put the dogwood, the judas-trees and the lilacs in bloom.

It was a day, not of exultation, but of deep, tranquil happiness and thanksgiving. On April 2nd, Richmond had fallen; on the 9th, Lee's ragged veterans had laid down their arms at Appomattox; while at noon on this day, the 14th, General Anderson was raising over the ruins of Fort Sumter the identical flag he had lowered exactly four years before. It was Good Friday. The war was over—the Union saved. And it was Lincoln's last day.

The President arose about 7 o'clock as was his custom. Breakfast that morning was a chatty meal. Captain Robert Lincoln, the President's son, had just arrived at the White House from the front where, as a member of General Grant's staff, he had witnessed Lee's surrender. Little Tad was also at the table and much excited over his big brother's description of the closing days of the war. The President listened quietly and with absorbed interest to the details of the campaign just ended. He was especially anxious about the treatment accorded

the Confederates, expressing the opinion that the southern troops "would never shoulder a musket again in anger at the old flag" and that their guns ought not to be taken from them as "they will be needed to shoot crows with when the men get back on the farm."

Captain Lincoln had brought back a portrait of General Lee and, as they talked, the President placed it before him on the table and scanned it long and thoughtfully.

"It is a good face," he said presently. "It is the face of a noble, brave man. I am glad the war is over at last." He was thinking, doubtless, also of that other great leader, Stonewall Jackson, who had been Lincoln's ideal soldier and of whom he had said: "He is a brave, honest, Presbyterian soldier. What a pity that we should have to fight such a gallant fellow. If we only had such a man to lead the armies of the North, the country would not be appalled with so many disasters."

FAMILY HAPPY AS DAY BEGAN

As they were leaving the table, the President said to Captain Lincoln earnestly: "Well, my son, you have returned safely from the front. The war is now closed, and we will soon live in peace with the brave men who have been fighting against us. I trust that the era of good feeling has returned, and that henceforth we shall live in harmony together." It was a happy hour that the family spent together before the day's work began.

Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House of Representatives, arrived about this time for an important interview regarding the policy of the government toward the South. This made it necessary to defer the President's engagement with General Grant, which he did in the following note:

"Executive Mansion,
"April 14, 1865.

"Lieutenant General Grant:

"Please call at 11 a. m. today, instead of 9 as agreed last evening.

"Very truly,

"A. LINCOLN."

While he was at his desk, he also penned a few hasty lines to one of his warm admirers, who had written him an anxious

letter, requesting him, for the sake of the country and his friends, not to risk his life unnecessarily as he had done at Richmond a few days before. Mr. Lincoln wrote:

"Washington, April 14, 1865.

"General James Van Allen,
"New York City.

"My Dear Sir:

"I intend to adopt the advice of my friends and use due precaution. I thank you for the assurance you give me that I shall be supported by conservative men like yourself, in the efforts I may make to restore the Union so as to make it, to use your language, a Union of hearts and hands as well as of States.

"Yours truly,

"A. LINCOLN."

The interview with Speaker Colfax lasted about an hour and, as it ended, General A. J. Cresswell, of Maryland, was ushered in. He requested the pardon of a Confederate prisoner. The President greeted him cordially.

"It has been an awful war, Cresswell," he said, "an awful war, but it's over," he added thankfully as without hesitation he endorsed the affidavits and directed them sent over to the War Department for immediate action. As the general was leaving, Lincoln's old friend, "Dick" Yates, recently elected senator from Illinois, came in with Colonel William Kellogg. Colonel Kellogg was known to be an able, tactful man, who had been a federal judge and colonel of the Seventh Illinois Cavalry. The post of Collector of the Port of New Orleans was vacant and Senator Yates was endorsing the colonel for that position. After some conversation, Lincoln agreed to make the appointment upon the recommendation of Yates and, turning to Kellogg, he spoke briefly but with great earnestness of the importance of his duties and of what his attitude should be toward the southern people with whom he came in contact. "I want you to make love to those people down there," the President concluded, as he directed the commission to be issued by the Secretary of the Treasury.

MRS. LINCOLN BUSY WITH THEATER PLANS

While the President had been thus engaged, Mrs. Lincoln was busy with plans for a theater party which she had arranged for General and Mrs. Grant. A messenger was sent from the Executive Mansion to accept the box which the management of Ford's theater had tendered Mr. Lincoln and his party for that evening.

After conference with the Honorable John P. Hale, the new Minister to Spain, and several members of Congress who discussed various matters, Mr. Lincoln left the White House and walked over to the War Department, as was his custom, to obtain the latest news from the front. He had made this visit every morning and evening during the war. The only telegraph office under governmental control was, at that time, located in the War Department and there, during the dark days of the struggle when the fate of the nation hung in the balance, he had spent many anxious hours and far into the night as the tide of battle ebbed and flowed. It was in the cipher room of this little telegraph office that he had written the first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Today, as the President glanced hastily over the files, he told Secretary Stanton that he had just been informed that General and Mrs. Grant had cancelled the theater engagement for that evening in order to visit their daughter who was attending school at Burlington, New Jersey. Stanton, who had long been apprehensive about the personal safety of his chief, strongly urged Mr. Lincoln to abandon the plan to attend Ford's theater, stating that in the large crowd, sure to be present, evil disposed persons would be better able to carry out their oft-repeated threats of assassination. The President, as usual, deprecated his Secretary's fears, but promised as a compromise to take along Major Rathbone as a sort of bodyguard. Then, as it was nearly the hour for the Cabinet meeting, Mr. Lincoln returned to the White House.

The Cabinet met promptly at 11 o'clock in the President's office. General Grant and the other members of the Cabinet had arrived ahead of Secretary Stanton and, while waiting for that official, the President warmly congratulated General Grant,

who described briefly the events connected with the surrender of General Lee. Lincoln inquired closely as to what terms he had made for the half-starved soldiers of the Confederacy and was much pleased at the information that they had been told to go home to their families, where they would not be molested so long as they did not again take up arms against the Government. Johnston had not yet surrendered and the conversation turned in this direction. General Grant remarked that he was anxiously awaiting news from Sherman, who had been sent to engage Johnston, and that he expected to hear from him any time.

LINCOLN HAD USUAL DREAM

"News will come soon and come favorably, I have no doubt," said the President, "for," he continued, "last night I had my usual dream which has preceded nearly every important event of the war."

Mr. Welles, Secretary of the Navy, inquired the particulars of this remarkable dream, to which Lincoln replied that it always occurred in the Navy Department—it related to the water; he seemed to be in a singular, indescribable vessel, but always the same, which floated or drifted with great rapidity toward a dark and indefinite shore; that this strange dream had preceded the firing on Fort Sumter, and the battles of Bull Run, Antietam, Gettysburg, Stone River, Vicksburg and Wilmington. General Grant remarked with some asperity that Stone River was no victory—that a few victories like that would have ruined the country.

"However the facts may be," replied the President, "the singular dream preceded that fight; victory has not always come, but the events and results have been important." Then he added, "I have no doubt that a battle has taken place or is being fought and Johnston will be beaten, for I had this strange dream last night. It must relate to Sherman; my thoughts are in that direction, and I know of no other very important event which is likely just now to occur."

Secretary Stanton having arrived, the President called the Cabinet to order and the members settled down to consideration of the momentous problem of dealing with the seceded States.

Afterward, Stanton, in recalling Lincoln's attitude on the subject that morning, said: "The President was very hopeful and cheerful and spoke kindly of General Lee and the other officers of the Confederacy. Particularly did his kindly feelings go out to the Confederate enlisted men, and he clearly showed that he desired to restore a satisfactory peace to the South through due regard for her vanquished citizens. Yet, while buoyant, he seemed depressed at times, notably when referring to his dream of the night before."

RESTORATION OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

What Lincoln had to say on the restoration of civil government in the South, was carefully noted by Secretary Welles and entered in his diary on the same day.

"I think it is providential that this great rebellion is crushed just as Congress has adjourned," said the President, "and there are none of the disturbing elements of that body to hinder and embarrass us. If we are wise and discreet, we will reanimate the States and get their governments in successful operation with order prevailing and the Union re-established before Congress comes together in December. This, I think, is important. We can do better, accomplish more without than with them. There are men in Congress who, if their motives are good, are nevertheless impractical and who possess feelings of hate and vindictiveness in which I do not sympathize and cannot participate. Enough lives have been sacrificed. We must extinguish our resentment if we expect harmony and union. There is too much of a desire on the part of some of our very good friends to be masters, to interfere with and dictate to those States, to treat the people not as fellow-citizens; there is too little respect for their rights.

"I hope," he went on, "there will be no persecution, no bloody work, after the war is over. No one need expect me to take any part in hanging or killing those men, even the worst of them. Frighten them out of the country, open the gates, let down the bars, scare them off." And the President, as he said this, smilingly threw up his big hands as if scaring sheep.

Mr. Lincoln then directed Stanton to draw up some plans for the State governments and to furnish copies to each member of the Cabinet by the next regular meeting on the following Tuesday.

As the meeting adjourned, the President again reminded his official family how important was the problem of reconstruction and the necessity for earnest, thoughtful deliberation thereon. Before leaving, the acting Secretary of State made an engagement for the President to receive the new British Minister, Sir Frederick Bruce, at 2 o'clock on the following afternoon.

As the members of the Cabinet left the conference and slowly made their way downstairs, all remarked on the fine personal appearance of the President, Stanton saying: "Didn't our chief look grand today?" And Attorney General Speed in his "Recollections" of that historic day, says: "I fondly cling to the memory of Mr. Lincoln's personal appearance as I saw him that day, with cleanly shaven face, well brushed clothing and neatly combed hair and whiskers."

It was now between 1 and 2 o'clock in the afternoon and past luncheon time. Major J. B. Merwin, of Connecticut, an old friend with whom Lincoln had stumped the State of Illinois in other days, having come in, the President had lunch brought up and they dined together in his office. During the conference, it was arranged for Merwin to see Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune, and other prominent newspaper men, relative to Lincoln's pet project to employ the colored troops, soon to be discharged from the Union armies, in the digging of a Panama canal.

Upon the departure of Major Merwin, Mr. Lincoln had a brief and rather unpleasant interview with Vice President Johnson. The subject was the future policy of the administration toward the South, now that the war was practically over. The impulsive and erratic Johnson urged harsh and vengeful measures toward those lately in arms against the government, but the President, sitting with one leg crossed over the other and quietly eating an apple, emphatically disagreed with Johnson's views and made it plain that no such action as he suggested would be allowed.

SETTLED TO AFTERNOON ROUTINE

At the close of this interview, Mr. Lincoln settled down to his afternoon routine of business. He signed a pardon for a soldier sentenced to be shot for desertion, remarking as he did so:

"I think the boy can do us more good above ground than under ground." He then approved an application for the discharge of a Confederate prisoner, on his taking the oath of allegiance. "Let it be done," he wrote on the recommendation and then signed it.

As he finished these tasks, the Honorable John B. Henderson, senator from Missouri, called on the President, asking for the release of a Confederate prisoner by the name of George Vaughn, from the senator's home State. Vaughn had been captured and sentenced to death as a spy. Mr. Lincoln had twice ordered retrials, but each time the verdict was the same. This afternoon, as the young "gray-back" was about to face the firing squad, Henderson urged the President to pardon him. And on this day, he found Lincoln's soft heart unusually tender.

"Senator, I agree with you," said Mr. Lincoln finally, "go to Stanton and tell him this man must be released."

"I have seen Stanton, and he will do nothing," protested Henderson.

"See him again," was the reply, "and if he will do nothing, come back to me." And with some misgivings, the senator left the White House to find the Secretary of War.

Major William H. Anderson, on the staff of General Sheridan, arrived from the front with important dispatches and Lincoln spent several minutes looking them over before sending the major to the War Department.

A woman who had been a servant in the Lincoln household at Springfield, obtained admittance. She had married and her husband had enlisted in the army. She was in real need of his assistance and support and sought his release. Statesmen and important dignitaries waited in the ante-room, while Mr. Lincoln greeted her in his friendly way and heard her story. Then he had a basket of fruit presented to her and directed her to

call next day, when he would see that she obtained a pass through the lines to her husband, and money to buy clothing for herself and children.

It was a very busy afternoon for the President, but finally the last caller was disposed of and he was ready, though it was growing late, to take the drive with Mrs. Lincoln which he had planned. As the carriage was being ordered, Mrs. Lincoln asked him if he desired to invite anyone to accompany them.

"No," replied Mr. Lincoln, "I prefer to ride by ourselves today."

SHOOK HANDS WITH ONE-ARMED SOLDIER

As Lincoln came down the stairway, a one-armed soldier stood talking to an attendant. He had come a long way to meet the President and his disappointment was keen when he found the executive offices closed. It would not be possible for him to stay over until tomorrow. "I'd almost give my other arm to shake hands with Abraham Lincoln," he was saying with voice shaken by disappointment. Just then he was much surprised and not a little confused when the President, who had come up unnoticed behind him, grasped his hand. "You shall do that and it shall cost you nothing, my boy," he said, shaking the young soldier's hand warmly. Mr. Lincoln then asked him his name, regiment and where he had lost his arm, and chatted pleasantly with him a few moments.

As he started for the carriage, which had arrived at the entrance, the President saw two ladies standing in the corridor. Going up to them, he shook hands and, finding that they were on their way to the White House Conservatory, he offered to escort them there. As they walked along, one of the ladies asked him if he was not very happy over the close of the war. A tender look came into his deep-set gray eyes, as he replied: "Yes, madam; for the first time since this cruel war began, I can see my way clearly." Then picking some fruit for his guests and requesting the gardener to gather them a basket of flowers, he lifted his hat and left them and, with Mrs. Lincoln, entered the waiting carriage.

It was a typical spring day. The sun was bright and warm and the President ordered the coachman to take one of the more

unfrequented roadways in the direction of the Soldiers' Home, where the Lincolns had been spending their summers when the heat of Washington was at its height. Mr. Lincoln was in a reminiscent mood. With the great burden of war off his heart, his thoughts turned to other and happier times. He spoke of their old home at Springfield, of his early days and struggles there, of the little brown cottage, the courtroom and his law office with the rusty sign, "Lincoln & Herndon," over the door. All his varied experiences while riding the Circuit, old friends—Swett, Davis, Arnold, Browning and others, noted trials, the green bag he used for his briefs and law papers—these memories came thronging back to him today.

HOPED FOR PEACE AND HAPPINESS

"Mary," he said as they rode along, "we have had a hard time of it since we came to Washington, but the war is over, and, with God's blessing, we may hope for four years of peace and happiness, and then we will go back to Illinois and probably pass the rest of our days in quiet there. We have laid by," he went on, "some money, and during this term we will try to save up more, but shall not have enough to support us. We will go back to Illinois and I will open a law office at Springfield or Chicago and practice law and at least do enough to help give us a livelihood."

During the drive, Mrs. Lincoln commented upon the fact that the President seemed in such fine spirits, to which he replied: "And well I may feel so, Mary, for I consider this day the war has come to a close." After a moment, he added: "We must both be more cheerful in the future—between the war and the loss of our darling Willie, we have been very miserable."

The streets and thoroughfares were crowded with people. Everybody was enjoying the holiday, the prospects of peace and the fine day. Everywhere the President and his wife were greeted with affectionate enthusiasm, to which Mr. Lincoln responded heartily. Mrs. Lincoln, in after years, often expressed the opinion that "the last day Mr. Lincoln lived was the happiest day of his life."

It was quite late in the afternoon when the President and Mrs. Lincoln returned to the White House. A few minutes

before they arrived, two of Lincoln's old friends from Illinois, Governor Richard Oglesby and General Isham N. Haynie, had called, but found him out. As Mr. Lincoln drove up, he saw them across the lawn leaving the grounds.

"Come back, boys, come back," he shouted, jumping out of the carriage and waving his long arms. And, as the two men retraced their steps and were shown into the reception room, the President hurried upstairs to brush the dust of the drive from his black, broadcloth suit.

Just then, Charles A. Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, rushed in and inquired for the President. He found him washing his hands in a side closet on the second floor and hastily informed him that a member of the Confederate Cabinet, Jacob Thompson, would be in town that night, trying to escape to Canada and Dana wanted to know what should be done.

"What does Stanton say," asked Lincoln.

"He says arrest him, but that I should refer the question to you," replied Dana.

"Well," answered Mr. Lincoln, slowly wiping his hands, "no, I rather guess not. When you have got an elephant by the hind leg, and he is trying to run away, it's best to let him run." And while Lincoln lived no warrant was ever issued for the arrest of Mr. Thompson.

READ FROM HUMORIST'S WRITING

The next hour passed swiftly. The President and his friends, down in the reception room, were having a good time. They talked, laughed and told stories and Lincoln read them four chapters from the latest work of his favorite humorist, "Petroleum" V. Nasby, laughing heartily as he came to something that struck him as particularly funny. He was called to dinner several times before he finally allowed his company to depart. When they had gone, he dined alone with the family.

When the meal was over, he saw Noah Brooks, a newspaper correspondent and intimate friend, a few minutes and then left with William H. Crook, his attendant, for a hurried visit to the War Department. As they walked across the lawn, Crook noticed that the President's buoyant spirits had deserted him

and that he seemed much depressed. Presently they came upon a crowd of drunken men and, as they passed, Mr. Lincoln said abruptly:

"Crook, do you know, I believe there are men who want to take my life?" adding after a pause, half to himself, "and it is possible they will do it?"

"Why do you think so, Mr. President," inquired the alarmed guard.

"Other men have been assassinated," was the reply. "I have perfect confidence in those around me—in everyone of you men," continued Mr. Lincoln. "I know no one could do it and escape alive. But, if it is to be done, it is impossible to prevent it."

Their arrival at the War Department ended the conversation at this point. Stanton at once took the President to task for refusing to arrest Jacob Thompson. "By permitting him to escape the penalties of treason, you sanction it," declared the hot-headed Secretary severely.

"Well," replied Lincoln, as his gray eyes twinkled, "that puts me in mind of a little story. There was an Irish soldier last summer who stopped at a drug store where he saw a soda fountain. The army regulation against the sale of liquor to soldiers was being strictly enforced much to his inconvenience. 'Misther Doctor,' he said, 'give me, please, a glass ov soda-wather and, if ye can put a few drops of whisky in unbeknown to anyone, I'll be obleeged to yees.'"

"Now," the President continued, "if Jake Thompson is permitted to go away unbeknown to anyone, where's the harm? Don't have him arrested."

On the way back to the White House, Crook was much relieved to see that the President was himself again and that his recent depression had wholly disappeared. Mr. Lincoln said to Crook that Mrs. Lincoln and he were going to the theater that evening to see "Our American Cousin" and concluded by saying: "It has been advertised that we will be there and I cannot disappoint the people. Otherwise I would not go. I do not care to go now." That the President's attendance had been much advertised is evidenced by the special playbills or programs which had been printed for the occasion, an original of

which the writer owns and which bears the following inscription at the top: "This evening the performance will be honored by the presence of President Lincoln."

At the White House, Mr. Lincoln found Speaker Colfax and Honorable George Ashmun, of Massachusetts, chairman of the convention that had nominated Lincoln in 1860, awaiting him in the Red Room. While this conference was going on, the card of Senator Stewart, of Nevada, who had called with his friend, Judge Searles, was brought up. Unable to see them, the President wrote the following message on a card and sent it down by the usher:

ONE OF HIS LAST MESSAGES

"I am engaged to go to the theater with Mrs. Lincoln. It is the kind of engagement I never break. Come with your friend tomorrow at 10 and I shall be glad to see you.

"A. LINCOLN."

As Mr. Lincoln continued to chat with his visitors, he was reminded that he was already half an hour late in starting for the theater and the gentlemen noticed that he seemed reluctant to leave, as the time for going approached. He said something about staying another half hour and, in fact, did not seem to care whether he went at all. Finally, however, he pulled himself away and went upstairs to get his coat and hat. A moment later, Senator Henderson, who had managed to elude the usher, found him in his office and hurriedly related how he had sought out Stanton and had informed him of the President's wishes in the case of George Vaughn. Stanton had become very angry and had refused to issue the pardon. Without a word, Mr. Lincoln turned to his desk and wrote a few lines on a sheet of paper. "I think that will have precedence over Stanton," he remarked, handing the order for the young soldier's release to the Senator.

As the President started downstairs, he stopped at the door of Captain Lincoln's room. "We're going to the theater, Bob, don't you want to go," he inquired. But the captain had not slept in a bed for some time and he said that, if his father did not mind, he would rather stay at home and "turn in early." The indulgent father, of course, did not mind at all and they parted with cheery "goodnights."

As Mr. Ashmun had expressed a desire to see the President again about the matter over which they had been talking, Lincoln hastily scribbled on a card, as he reached the door, the last words he was ever to write and which memorandum is now carefully preserved in the Library of Congress:

"Allow Mr. Ashmun and his friends to come in at 9 a.m. tomorrow.

"April 14, 1865.

"A. LINCOLN."

Outside, under the gaslights, upon the broad stone flagging beneath the portico, the carriage and Mrs. Lincoln were waiting. Realizing that they were late and that they had to drive by for their guests, Miss Harris and Major Rathbone, the President bade his friends goodnight and hurried to the carriage.

START TO THE THEATER

"I am going to the theater," he called in a carefree voice to his old friend, Hon. Isaac N. Arnold, congressman from Illinois, whom he saw approaching. "Come in and see me in the morning." And the carriage rolled away down the drive.

The play at Ford's theater that evening was Tom Taylor's eccentric comedy, "Our American Cousin," starring Miss Laura Keene, a celebrated actress of her day. It was the last night of the engagement. The house was packed from orchestra to gallery with a gay and brilliant throng—stately dames in rich costumes, officers in full dress uniforms, members of the Diplomatic Corps, prominent government officials, well-known citizens, young ladies and gallant beaux. There were glowing clusters of gaslights and the harmony of violins and flutes. The end of the war, the holiday, the attendance of the President and, as was expected, General Grant, had filled the theater to capacity.

It was nearly 9 o'clock when Mr. Lincoln and his party arrived. The play was well under way but, at sight of the tall figure in the "State box," the actors stopped and the orchestra struck up "Hail to the Chief," while the audience rose and cheered and waved handkerchiefs. To this ovation, the President bowed and smiled in his plain, genial way.

The two balcony boxes on the right of the audience had been thrown into one by removing the partition. An American flag was draped on each side of the middle pillar, with the treasury regimental flag in the center under which hung a portrait of Washington. The "State box" was very attractive and comfortable. The President sat in a rocking chair nearest the audience. Mrs. Lincoln was on his right; Miss Harris was next to her, while Major Rathbone sat on the end of a sofa nearest the stage.

As the play progressed, Mr Lincoln was much amused by the bright dialogue of the comedy. During the curtain periods, he laughed and chatted with Mrs. Lincoln and the others of the party. He left his seat only once and that was a few minutes before the tragedy, when he put on his overcoat. The night was warm and in the packed house even spring weight clothes seemed heavy, but something that did not strike the bared shoulders of the ladies in the box made the tall, gaunt man in black broadcloth shiver—and he got up and put on his overcoat.

JOHN WILKES BOOTH ENTERS

It was a little before 10 o'clock, when a young man entered the theater and pushing his way through the crowd, stood for a moment in the rear of the dress-circle apparently watching the play. He was strikingly handsome—of medium stature and gracefully slender, with a mass of black, wavy hair that contrasted with the pallor of his fine, high forehead and aristocratic features. It was John Wilkes Booth, a popular young actor, well known to Washington theater-goers, but not in the cast playing that evening. Few paid any attention to him or noticed that, though perfectly composed, he was deathly pale and that the odor of brandy was on his lips. Presently, unnoticed he slipped noiselessly into the passageway leading to the President's box, closed the door softly and placed a piece of stout plank behind it so that no one could enter from the outside.

The second scene of the third act was on and the fun of the play was at its height. Mrs. Lincoln was bending forward with

one hand resting on her husband's knee. The President was leaning carelessly on one hand while the other toyed with a portion of the drapery which partially screened the box.

Harry Hawk, as Asa Trenchard, and a haughty, designing old woman, Mrs. Mount Chessington, were engaged in a tart dialogue and every eye was on the stage. Presently Mrs. Mount Chessington flounced off with a taunt about Asa's being unaccustomed to society.

"Society, eh?," said Asa, looking after her, "well, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, you darned old sockdolaging man trap." A gale of laughter greeted this defense of "Our American Cousin" and, as it swept thru the theatre, there came the sharp report of a pistol. For a moment the audience sat quite still, thinking it came from behind the stage and was a part of the play. Then, they saw Booth, with a smoking pistol in one hand and a dagger in the other, rush to the front of the President's box, stab Rathbone in the arm as he barred the way, and leap to the stage. As he jumped, his spur caught in one of the flags that draped the box and he fell heavily with his left leg doubled beneath him. He was up in an instant, however, and brandishing the knife, ran out a rear exit to where a fleet horse was waiting in the alley.

A TRAGEDY OF THE AGES

The scene which followed is vividly described by the poet, Walt Whitman, who was present: "A moment's hush—a scream—the cry of murder—Mrs. Lincoln leaning out of the box, with ashy cheeks and lips, with involuntary cry, pointing to the retreating figure. 'He has killed the President.' And still a moment's strange, incredulous suspense—and then that mixture of horror, noises, uncertainty—(the sound, somewhere back of a horse's hoofs clattering with speed)—the people burst thru chairs and railing and break them up—that noise adds to the queerness of the scene—there is inextricable confusion and terror—women faint—feeble persons fall and are trampled on—many cries of agony are heard—the broad stage suddenly fills to suffocation with a dense and motley crowd, like some horrible carnival—the audience rush generally upon it—at least the strong men do—the actors and actresses are there in their play

costumes and painted faces, with mortal terror showing thru the rouge—some trembling, some in tears—the screams and calls, confused talk redouble, treble—two or three manage to pass water from the stage to the President's box—others try to clamber up."

But in the midst of all the pandemonium, there was one figure that did not stir. The President sat quietly in his chair. His head drooped slightly forward and his arms had relaxed a little. His eyes were closed, but the smile at the actor's repartee was still on his lips. Unconsciousness had been instantaneous.

There was some delay in locating the wound, but when Dr. Taft found it behind the left ear, the order for a carriage was countermanded and the doctor directed that the President be carried to the nearest bed. Gently the inert form was placed upon a shutter that had been wrenched from its hinges and on this improvised litter he was carried from the theatre and across the street to a cheap, humble lodging house. In a little back room on the first floor at the rear of the hall, the President was placed on a bed—cornerwise as only in that way could his great length be accommodated. Messengers were dispatched for Captain Lincoln; members of the Cabinet; the Surgeon General; Dr. Stone, Mr. Lincoln's private physician; Rev. Dr. Gurley, pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian church, and others.

A more thoro examination revealed the fact that the assassin's bullet had entered the back of the President's head toward and about three inches above the left ear, had ranged slightly downward and had lodged behind the left eye. The wound was hopelessly fatal. It was only a question of when the marvelous vitality would surrender.

THE LAST LONG NIGHT

Thru the long night, the little hall bedroom was crowded with nurses, physicians, members of the Cabinet and friends. Mrs. Lincoln and her attendants were in an adjoining room and frequently she came to the bedside and remained until, overcome by emotion, she had to be led away. In another room Secretary Stanton sat at a table grimly issuing orders and writing dispatches which slowly but surely drew the net around the fleeing assassin.

The wounded man was wholly unconscious, but seemed not altogether insensible to pain, as he moaned faintly now and then. His loud breathing was accompanied at times by a struggling motion of the arms. In the earlier hours, the heart action was strong and regular, but as the night wore on it became evident that the end was near. Surgeon General Barnes sat on the side of the bed with his fingers on the President's pulse. He had issued bulletins thruout the night, informing the public of the patient's condition. At 6 o'clock the bulletin read: "Pulse failing," and at 6:30: "Still failing."

Then as daylight crept into the dingy room, the intermittent moaning ceased; the arms became quiet; the breathing grew softer and fainter and a look of unspeakable peace came over the seamed and careworn face. At twenty-two minutes and ten seconds past 7 o'clock, General Barnes removed his hand from the President's wrist and gently closed the lid of his watch—Abraham Lincoln was dead.

Secretary Stanton walked over to the narrow door, leading into the back yard, which had remained ajar during the night. For a moment he stood looking at the dreary scene outside. From leaden skies a cold rain was falling steadily. Then the grizzled old statesman turned to the bed where his chief lay with face as untroubled and serene as martyr ever wore. "Now he belongs to the Ages," said Stanton softly. And Dr. Gurley kneeling by the bedside, bowed his head upon the bloodstained coverlet and prayed fervently.

